
James Cary Smith Community Grant Program – Cycle 2 Request for Applications Frequently Asked Questions

Updated December 5, 2024 – **New questions since November 22 are in blue**

Please note: This FAQ document is final. No further updates will be posted before the application period closes **Tuesday, January 7, 2025 at 5:00 PM Pacific Time.**

The deadline for submitting questions regarding the Cycle 2 Request for Applications was **Wednesday, December 4, 2024 at 5:00 PM.**

1. *Are we able to collaborate with other nonprofits in Alameda, Sacramento and/or Santa Clara counties?*

Partnerships are welcomed – however, projects must be located within the Bay Area Air Quality Management District’s jurisdiction. Our Air District includes Alameda and Santa Clara Counties, but not Sacramento County. To view the Air District’s boundaries, please see this interactive map:

<https://arcg.is/abX4W>.

There is an opportunity for applicants to share information about existing or planned partnerships through the grant application process. Question #5 on the grant application asks applicants to: “Provide a brief description of existing or planned partnerships with any other community-based organizations and leaders, public agencies, or other collaborators, detailing what they are providing to the proposed project (subcontracting, outreach collaboration, translation assistance, etc.)” (Please see page 19 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).)

2. *How many grants is this particular grant going to provide? How many slots will be available to nonprofits? Will it be distributed evenly or equitably across the board, from Gilroy to San Jose? Is there any additional funding expected to continue the work?*

The Air District anticipates that this will be a very competitive grant cycle. The exact number of slots will depend on dollar amounts requested in the grant applications. We anticipate awarding between six to 11 grants, depending on applications received. In terms of geographic distribution of the grants - the application review panel will evaluate all completed applications that meet all minimum requirements. The review panel will take geography into consideration, given the limited number of spots.

Unfortunately, we can't guarantee that every environmental justice community in the Air District's jurisdiction will receive a grant or will receive the same dollar amount. However, the review panel will do its best to ensure that no area is over-represented. For more information about the review of applications, please see page 11 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).

3. *In terms of the grant, should we apply for the three-year term, or does the application only cover the two-year term?*

In the application, organizations can indicate the total number of years of funding they desire, up to a maximum of three years. It could be one year, two years, or three years. The amounts requested per

year could vary. Some organizations may choose to request a larger amount for the first year and then reduce it in subsequent years, perhaps because they have other funding sources or anticipate changes in their project's needs. The application review panel will review the project narrative to understand the reasoning behind those requests.

4. *Community organizing and active participation sound very similar to me. Do we have to pick one track? How do we differentiate between them?*

There is a lot of overlap between the two program categories. Applicants can mark both program categories on their application and integrate different strategies through funded projects. The project narrative provides an opportunity to explain the planned approach and to describe the communities in which the projects will take place.

5. *Can religious organizations apply?*

If a religious organization has 501(c)(3) status, it can apply for a grant. If the organization doesn't have this status, it can work with a fiscal sponsor to apply. (Please see page 6 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).)

6. *If we are a current grantee, can we apply to continue the same/similar programming?*

Yes, current/Cycle 1 James Cary Smith grantees are eligible to submit applications to continue the same or similar programming during Cycle 2. We recommend that project narratives include clear language about how the proposed project would build on the success of and be different than the Cycle 1 project, including how it will expand or deepen capacity-building work.

7. *What other environmental justice issues will be considered?*

We leave that to the applicants to highlight in their project narratives, making a strong case for the environmental justice issues relevant to their project.

8. *Will preference be given to projects in communities awaiting Assembly Bill 617 designation over those that are not, yet still have an EnviroScreen score greater than 70?*

No, there is no preference for Assembly Bill 617 communities over communities with a CalEnviroScreen score greater than 70, or vice versa. For more information about preferential geographies, please see pages 6-7 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).

9. *Is the grant reimbursement-based?*

No, the grant is not reimbursement-based. It operates under a deliverables-based contract. Typically, the Air District provides some seed funding to each grantee after the contract is executed. After that, grant payments would be issued approximately every four months after staff receive and review progress reports and deliverables from grantees.

10. *If an organization is doing larger projects in two different counties, should they submit one application or two?*

Each applicant is limited to one proposal for Cycle 2 of the program. Please submit one application, with a clear explanation of the communities involved. The narrative should detail who will benefit from the project, why the project is needed, and why it makes sense to run it in two different counties.

11. I tried to find information on communities awaiting Assembly Bill 617 designations in the resources provided on your website and alongside the grant RFP. I could find lots of information for Northern San Mateo County, but not specifically this. Where do I find this information?

The California Air Resources Board has created a Consistently Nominated AB 617 Communities list. The communities on that list which are not currently AB 617 designated communities may be considered preferential geographies for the James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications. For more information, please visit: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/capp/resources/consistently-nominated-ab-617-communities-list>.

12. Could we potentially partner with other government agencies too? Let's say we want to do air quality and open spaces or something like that. Would it be okay to reach out to other government agencies? What's allowed in terms of partnerships with them, whether it's a letter of support or if it can be a greater commitment?

Please note the Air District does not require or accept letters of support or references for this grant application. However, we do encourage partnerships. Applicants should include any information about existing or planned partnerships in Question 5 of the Project Narrative. There is also a requirement to submit a budget. Other government agencies can be listed as subrecipients of grant funds. Alternatively, if other funding from public agencies or entities is supporting the project, that information should be included. The budget is a required component of the application, but is not scored.

13. Would projects in Sonoma County be considered?

The Air District's jurisdiction includes part of Solano County and part of Sonoma County. For more details, please see the interactive map here: <https://arcg.is/abX4W>. Proposals can be submitted for projects anywhere within the Air District's jurisdiction, but preference will be given to those in the top 30th percentile of CalEnviroScreen 4.0, indicated in pink on the map. If you have any questions while exploring the map, please contact our team at communitygrants@baqmd.gov before December 4, 2024 at 5:00 PM.

14. Is there a possibility that the grant may be affected by the recent election [in November 2024]?

No, the grant will not be affected by the recent election. The funds are already set aside for the grant awards and the election results will not impact that.

15. Is there a disadvantage or advantage for being a current grantee?

There is no disadvantage or advantage to being a current James Cary Smith Community Grant Program grantee. Please note that there are minimum requirements that each applicant will need to satisfy. Applications that meet all minimum requirements will be reviewed by an application review panel. Please assume that the application review panel will not know anything about your organization or the project community you are working in, even if you have received one or more Air District grants in the past. Make sure to provide thorough information and spell out any acronyms.

16. Can we apply to keep serving the cities we are currently working with by our current JCS grant?

Current and recent recipients of James Cary Smith Community Grants are eligible to apply for Cycle 2 funding. Applicants should be very specific in the Project Narrative about what their proposed project is, what the proposed geographic focus is, whether that geographic focus would change from a current

or recent grant award, and if so, why. Applicants should also emphasize how additional funding would build upon the successes of a current or recent grant and explain how the proposed project would expand their reach and impact.

17. Follow-up question: For current grantees, how are they assessed differently than new grantees?

All applications will be screened to see if they meet minimum requirements. Eligible applications will then be evaluated and ranked according to the scoring criteria in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#). An application review panel will review the program narratives and the cover sheets for each applicant. Applications for current grantees will not be assessed differently from other applicants. Applicants should be very specific in the Project Narrative about what their proposed project is. Current and recent grantees should emphasize how additional funding would build upon the successes of a current or recent grant and explain how the proposed project would expand their reach and impact.

18. Is there a way to find orgs that are willing to partner?

Partnerships are welcomed and encouraged. Prospective applicants are invited to review the Air District's website where we have lists of previous and current JCS grant awardees: <https://www.baaqmd.gov/en/funding-and-incentives/funding-sources/community-grants-program/community-grant-awards>. If any of the projects are of interest, you could consider reaching out to those organizations directly.

19. [Does] an eligible project include the purchase of passenger vans to transport people? Electric passenger vans to be specific.

The James Cary Smith Community Grant Program is designed to help build the capacity of local communities. If a potential project does not have a capacity-building component, the project may be better suited for a different Air District program. For example, the Air District's [Clean Cars for All](#) program provides grants for individuals to retire their older car and replace it with a cleaner option.

20. Would a project that includes community engagement, organizing, and education that eventually culminates in a community tree planting or sidewalk garden installation be eligible? And more specifically, would materials and supplies costs be eligible expenses?

Yes, that would be an eligible project, and those costs could be eligible expenses. Please keep the grant's focus on helping to build community capacity in mind. The project narrative should describe how the project would build the power of community members and help people to fully participate in decisions that impact the environment and health of their communities.

21. Can we apply [for] this grant based on the current BAAQMD program, such as "Clean Car for All"?

The [Clean Cars for All Program](#) is separate program of the Air District. Sharing information about the Clean Cars for All program with community members is encouraged, but Project Narratives for the James Cary Smith Community Grant Program should describe a capacity building project that the applicant would implement in one or more local communities.

22. Would project materials and supplies costs be eligible expenses?

Yes, project materials and supply costs would likely be eligible expenses. Work that cannot be funded is listed on page 9 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).

The budget is a required component of the application but is not scored. To access a sample project budget template, please click here:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/yhnk5fv8pd2m67b/Your_Organization_Name_Proposal_Budget.xlsx?dl=0

The format for project budgets is flexible, but budgets should include personnel costs and materials and supplies costs if applicable.

23. Community Weather stations? Would that be something eligible?

Community weather stations and air monitoring projects are not eligible for this grant.

24. Would a CA registered tribal community but with no federal land qualify as priority when they do not have any land but instead targeting the members of the tribe?

We encourage you to apply and to include detailed information about the tribal community in the Application Cover Sheet and the Project Narrative under Question 2, "Community Description." The application review panel will review each application and will determine whether proposed projects would serve preferential geographies and be eligible for a 5-point bonus.

25. On the application Cover Sheet, how do you want applicants to state how long they've been in business? We have been fiscally sponsored since 2020-21, but also now have our own EIN - just waiting to receive the Determination Letter from the IRS.

On the application Cover Sheet, for the "Year Established" field, applicants can list the year that their organization began. It is fine if the group is/was fiscally sponsored at that time.

26. Can we get a list of items that are ineligible for billing?

Work that cannot be funded is listed on page 9 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).

27. Can projects be in Napa and Solano County and get preference?

Eligible projects must be within the Air District's geographical jurisdiction, which includes Napa and Southern Solano counties. To view an interactive map showing Bay Area communities with an overall CalEnviroScreen score of 70 to 100 as well as the four designated AB 617 communities, please visit this link: <https://arcg.is/abX4W>.

Preference will be given to proposed projects in the following communities awaiting AB 617 designation: the Pittsburg-Bay Point area, San Jose, San Leandro, the Tri-Valley (including the cities of Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton, and San Ramon), and Vallejo.

Projects based in those communities as well as communities with an overall score of 70 to 100 in CalEnviroScreen 4.0 will receive preference for grant funding.

NOTE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0 is a tool used to screen for relative pollution burden, but is not the only consideration for preference. If another jurisdiction located within the Air District's boundaries has a different screening methodology that identifies other environmental justice communities, the applicant should include that in their application for consideration.

29. Where is the [list of] Cycle 1 grant awardees/projects that were funded, located on the BAAQMD website?

You can find lists of previous and current grantees here on our website:

<https://www.baaqmd.gov/en/funding-and-incentives/funding-sources/community-grants-program/community-grant-awards>.

30. Is there a link to the cover page PDF?

Yes – you can access a PDF of the James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Application Cover Sheet here: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:77cd0f37-885d-4e03-8ee3-e4e3ff14cdd6>.

31. [I'm] curious about the current East Oakland CERP CSC [Community Emissions Reduction Plan Community Steering Committee] ... are they an existing grantee? We're connected to some of these groups but I'm not sure what their work looks like on the ground.

The East Oakland CERP Community Steering Committee is not a grantee or one community-based organization – the Committee is made up of individuals and representatives with various backgrounds and affiliations. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District and Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) are Co-Leads for the CERP process. To access lists of current and recent grantees and project names, please visit this webpage: <https://www.baaqmd.gov/en/funding-and-incentives/funding-sources/community-grants-program/community-grant-awards>.

For more information about the East Oakland CERP CSC and its work, please visit this webpage: <https://www.baaqmd.gov/community-health/community-health-protection-program/east-oakland-community-emissions-reduction-plan>. The “Meetings and Events” table includes meeting agendas, slide decks, and recordings for the monthly CSC meetings.

32. [We're] not sure it makes sense for us to apply. I feel like as an organization we're well suited to support EJ groups through our program...We ourselves wouldn't want to lead an EJ project since there are others doing that well in the space, but we can support their community organizing methodology and implementation. I have a feeling this doesn't warrant applying for the grant... but would appreciate your thoughts!

If an organization doesn't feel that they would want to lead an environmental justice project, they may want to consider partnership with one or more other organizations - subrecipients are allowable for the grant. There is an opportunity for applicants to share information about existing or planned partnerships through the grant application process. Question #5 on the grant application asks applicants to: “Provide a brief description of existing or planned partnerships with any other community-based organizations and leaders, public agencies, or other collaborators, detailing what they are providing to the proposed project (subcontracting, outreach collaboration, translation assistance, etc.)” (Please see page 19 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).)

33. I just wanted to clarify the geographic boundaries of the JCS Community Grant Program, as our work is in Sonoma County and was wondering what specific areas of Sonoma County are eligible for the grant program?

The geographic boundaries for the grant program are the same as the Air District's jurisdiction – this includes southern Sonoma County. To view the Air District's boundaries, please see this interactive map: <https://arcg.is/abX4W>. For information about preferential geographies within the Air District's jurisdiction, please see pages 6-7 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).

34. I wondered if I could check in with you about an idea for a JCS proposal.

Prospective applicants - including current and previous grantees – aren't able to consult with Air District staff about questions specific to a particular grant proposal, or receive recommendations around how to improve individual proposals while the grant application period is open.

35. I would like clarification regarding project eligibility in the black border region illustrated on the JCS interactive map. Can you please confirm whether proposed projects can occur in any region within the black border (BAAQMD jurisdiction) on the JCS map, or only the blue (AB617) and pink (Cal 4.0) highlighted regions on the map and preferential areas listed on page 7 of the JCS grant guidelines?

Proposals can be submitted for projects anywhere within the Air District's jurisdiction, indicated by the black border on the Cycle 2 Request for Applications map: <https://arcg.is/abX4W>.

Preference will be given to proposed projects in the following communities awaiting AB 617 designation: the Pittsburg-Bay Point area, San Jose, San Leandro, the Tri-Valley (including the cities of Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton, and San Ramon), and Vallejo. Projects based in those communities as well as communities with an overall score of 70 to 100 in CalEnviroScreen 4.0 (indicated in pink on the Cycle 2 Request for Applications map) will receive preference for grant funding.

NOTE: CalEnviroScreen 4.0 is a tool used to screen for relative pollution burden, but is not the only consideration for preference. If another jurisdiction located within the Air District's boundaries has a different screening methodology that identifies other environmental justice communities, the applicant should include that in their application for consideration.

If you have any other questions about the map or preferential geographies, please contact our team at communitygrants@baqmd.gov before December 4, 2024 at 5:00 PM.

36. Can our organization be part of more than one application in one of the following scenarios:

1) We are acting as a sub-grantee in an application. Can we also be a sub on another application - so we would be applying as a sub-grantee on two applications. AND

2) Can we also apply as Prime in one application if we are already applying as a sub on another application (or possibly two applications as sub)?

Yes, prospective applicants can be named as a subgrantee on more than one application, and/or apply as a Prime in a different application. However, if multiple projects that your organization is named on were to be awarded funds, an organization cannot be funded through multiple grants to do the same work.

37. *With the upcoming grant cycle is there a link with all the deadlines listed and the BAAQMD [Procurement Portal] Bonfire link?*

For all deadlines/important dates for the Cycle 2 Request for Applications, please see page 5 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#). To access recordings of the two pre-application webinars and the Frequently Asked Questions document, please visit www.baaqmd.gov/communitygrants.

All applicants must submit their applications through the Procurement Portal (Bonfire): <https://baaqmd.bonfirehub.com>.

38. *I request if you can send me the fillable template for the Cover sheet and budget template.*

- To access a PDF of the Cycle 2 Application Cover Sheet, please click here: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:77cd0f37-885d-4e03-8ee3-e4e3ff14cdd6>
- To access a sample project budget template, please click here: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/yhnk5fv8pd2m67b/Your Organization Name Proposal Budget.xlsx?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/yhnk5fv8pd2m67b/Your_Organization_Name_Proposal_Budget.xlsx?dl=0). The format for project budgets is flexible, but budgets should include personnel costs and materials and supplies costs if applicable.

39. *We are interested in applying for the James Cary Smith Grant but have some questions. We are not a 501(c)(3) organization. The City of [redacted], however, would like to serve as our sponsor. Would that be acceptable?*

Applicants must either have 501(c)(3) status, or work with a fiscal sponsor that has 501(c)(3) status to apply for a JCS Cycle 2 grant. For that reason, a City cannot serve as the fiscal sponsor for a project. We recommend that your organization work with an eligible tax-exempt organization to apply for a grant. For more information about entities that can apply for a grant, please see pages 6-7 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).

40. *I saw you're accepting questions up until Dec 4. Where do I post those questions?*

Please submit all questions via email to communitygrants@baaqmd.gov. Answers will be posted to the Air District's website in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document which will be updated periodically during the grant application period. To access the current FAQs document, please visit this webpage: www.baaqmd.gov/communitygrants.

41. *Where can we get the lists of: Current / past grantee projects; details around the four ongoing projects authorized by AB 617 within the Air District's jurisdiction; other community-based work supported by the Air District in the four designated AB 617 communities (to avoid duplication); communities that have not yet enjoyed the benefit of AB 617 investments.*

- You can find lists of previous and current grantees here on our website: <https://www.baaqmd.gov/en/funding-and-incentives/funding-sources/community-grants-program/community-grant-awards>.

- Please click on the links below to learn about the ongoing projects authorized by AB 617 within the Air District’s jurisdiction:
 - [Bayview Hunters Point/Southeast San Francisco](#)
 - [East Oakland](#)
 - [West Oakland](#)
 - [The Richmond-North Richmond-San Pablo area](#)

To view the boundaries for each of those projects, please visit this interactive map:
<https://arcg.is/abX4W>.

- Other community-based work supported by the Air District in the four designated AB 617 communities:
 - Information for the projects is included on the webpages linked in the bullet point above for the four ongoing projects authorized by AB 617.
- Communities the Air District has identified as awaiting AB 617 designation from the California Air Resources Board are listed below, by ZIP code:

East San Jose	Pittsburg/ Bay Point	San Leandro	Tri-Valley	Vallejo
95122		94577	94582	94589
95116	94565	94578	94583 (San Ramon)	94590
95127	94520	94579	94568 (Dublin)	94591
95121			94566	94592
95111			94568	
			94588 (Pleasanton)	
			94550, 94551 (Livermore)	

42. What does "this is not a reimbursement-based grant" mean precisely? I see that receipts are needed at each Progress Report. would we need to provide staff timesheets as well?

The James Cary Smith community grants are deliverables-based contracts. Grant funds are released in installments upon receipt of regular progress reports and deliverables – the payment schedule and list of deliverables will be outlined in each grant contract. Grantees must submit receipts with each progress report, and must submit records related to payroll and stipends issued using grant funds annually during the grant period. For more information about payment of grant funds, please see page 13 in the [James Cary Smith Community Grant Program Cycle 2 Request for Applications](#).

43. Is food for participants an allowable expense as part of a qualifying proposed program application. Please clarify if your current FAQ #22 answers this question: "22. Would project materials and supplies costs be eligible expenses?"

Yes, items such as food and/or gift cards for participants are allowable expenses if they will support capacity-building projects for community members. Grantees must submit receipts for materials purchased using grant funds.

44. *What are the reporting requirements for this funding each year? (assuming a three-year application)*

Each grantee will develop and submit a progress report every four months during the grant term, and one final project summary report. The progress reports and final report must document progress toward and final completion of the tasks and deliverables in the grantee work plan. The Air District will provide reporting deadlines, templates, and requirements to grantees.

45. *For funded projects, does BAAQMD have a process to amend the budget if an unexpected source of inkind or financial support later becomes available and funds are needed in another category?*

Grantees must notify the Air District of any change in project implementation and/or funding during the grant period. A budget amendment may be possible. A grantee seeking a budget amendment would discuss the situation with their grant manager, and would then submit a revised project budget for consideration.